



Consortium

*A unique and groundbreaking collaboration
between SUNY Orange, SUNY Ulster, SUNY
Rockland and SUNY Sullivan has
created the OURS Consortium,
merging the four colleges'
emergency services and
first responder degree programs
in a true regional approach to education.*

Technology and ingenuity are the two biggest advantages the United States has in preserving its homeland security and fighting the many faces of terrorism during the coming months and years, according to Michael Chertoff, director of the nation's Department of Homeland Security.

It is those two traits that are at the foundation of the OURS Consortium, a cutting-edge, four-college collaboration involving SUNY community colleges in Orange, Ulster, Rockland and Sullivan counties. Through the consortium, students throughout the Hudson Valley will be able to take classes and receive degrees in emergency management, fire protection science, paramedic services, human services and cyber security. Graduates will be able to seek jobs with professional



is "OURS"

fire departments, police departments, emergency service organizations, and in private industry as emergency management specialists in the Hudson Valley and in the metropolitan area.

The consortium, announced in September 2006, is the product of the creative collaborative visions of each of the participating colleges' presidents, the strong support of the region's state legislators (**John Bonacic, Bill Larkin and Thomas Morahan**) and the yeoman, behind-the-scenes legwork of numerous faculty members and administrators.

For SUNY Orange, taking the lead in developing the consortium's cyber security program allows for a unique partnership that carries numerous advantages.

"Our graduates will be ready to take leadership roles in major fire, police, emergency service and security departments throughout the region," asserts **Dr. William Richards**, SUNY Orange president. "They will have a background in management, understand the principles behind providing emergency services and be able to apply their knowledge in the 'real world' in the most dangerous situations."

"What is special about this consortium is that, from day one, everyone was aware that we needed to collaborate and not compete. It's about working together, and I think that the leadership involved in the consortium is doing a wonderful job," comments **Dr. Sue Deer**, associate vice president for the health professions. Deer represents the College on the Consortium Executive Committee, joining vice presidents **Dr. Catherine**

Chew (academic affairs) and **Dan Bloomer** (administration).

"Independently, each of the four colleges offers very good programs, but together we can jointly offer tremendously viable programs," Deer adds.

Marianne Collins, consortium coordinator, hails the partnership as "groundbreaking" and admits many within the SUNY system are watching, which means the consortium's organizational structure, management and fiscal efficiency could become a pilot for future groups to follow.

She adds, "The consortium grew out of a recognition that every community in the Hudson Valley has a need for well-educated and well-trained first responders. The community college system has been a key part of that training for many years."

By utilizing video teleconferencing and online study, along with traditional classroom work, students in Orange County will be able to complete first responder-specific degree programs at the other three colleges without having to commute to those campuses. An initial \$4 million dollar start-up grant acquired by Bonacic, Larkin and Morahan has supported the creation of the consortium and the initial technological upgrades necessary to facilitate video teleconferencing on the four campuses.



Joining together in September to announce the consortium were, from left, Dr. William Richards, president, SUNY Orange; Dr. Donald C. Katt, president, SUNY Ulster; Senator John J. Bonacic; Marianne Collins, consortium coordinator; Senator William Larkin; and Dr. Cliff L. Wood, president, SUNY Rockland.

computer forensics, has consulted with SUNY Orange staff throughout the process and has been an invaluable resource.

The College is prepared to offer the initial courses in its cyber security program this

fall with anticipated program approval expected from the SUNY administration and the State Education Department prior to the Fall 2008 semester. The College's new cyber security program, which Festa assures will be "a very comprehensive and detail-oriented computer and network forensics degree program" should appeal to traditional students as well as current emergency services personnel seeking further training or a career change.

"I think the cyber security program will excite a lot of students," explains O'Loughlin, whose research into the Hudson Valley's homeland security structure on behalf of SUNY Orange earlier this decade helped establish the bedrock principals upon which the consortium stands today. "Today's students have very good computer skills. They may want a career in law enforcement but may not be sure where they fit in. This gives them a chance at fulfilling their dreams through the avenues of halting cyber crime and improving cyber security."

By merging their ingenuity with advanced computer skills, students throughout the Hudson Valley can build a rewarding career in cyber security thanks to SUNY Orange's emerging program, or they can utilize the OURS Consortium to become a valued member of one of the varied emergency management and first responder professions that will be critical to securing our homeland in the future.

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Deer and **Jim Dutcher**, associate vice president for information technology, have overseen the upgrade to the College's technological infrastructure. Meanwhile, **Dr. Melody Festa**, associate vice president for math, science and technology, has guided the cyber security curriculum development as well as design of a new cyber security lab planned for

the Bio-Tech Building along with **Richard Heppner**, vice president for liberal arts, and department chairs **Fern Steane** (applied technology) and **Dennis O'Loughlin** (criminal justice). Countless others on campus have contributed as well.

John Otero, New York City Police Department's chief investigator of